

# The Western Seminary Bulletin

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### God's Redemptive Judgments

SIMON BLOCKER

Of all true prophets of God, it may be said "They being dead, yet speak." Such is the case certainly with the Old Testament prophet Micah. He was raised up of God in the eighth century before Christ to speak for God to the capitals of Israel and Judah and to all on earth. He knew, as Moffat translates it, that he had "The message of the Eternal" and so he speaks, not to the empty pews of a neglected sanctuary, but to the living, the wide world over, "Attend, all nations, listen, O earth and all on earth! The Eternal has a warning for you."

The prophet Micah spoke not only to all on earth in his day but to all on earth from his own day to ours, especially to eras burdened with troubled times and a tragic sense of impending catastrophe. He has the answer to human confusion and to the seeming futility of life. Man cannot just behave as he pleases and get away with it. We live in a moral world order. The universe is constructed on the principle of God's fatherly love. The spirit of self-seeking and the passion for self-getting can get man nothing but disaster.

The man Micah knew the character and purpose of God. He was therefore able to put his finger on the pulse of the general life and tell what was the matter. He was qualified to make a true appraisal of what was going on. What he saw was economic depravity, judicial corruption, vast social injustice and perversion of the worship of God. He found that the clergy of the rich condoned the evil practices of those who paid their salaries. They were false prophets. The only one condemned by the false prophets was the true prophet and at such they thundered, "For talk like that you lose your share in the community of the Eternal."

When the human situation gets out of hand, people become very inclined to hurl defying questions of accusation against God. "What's the matter with God anyway?" They do not want to recall the moment when they turned their back on God and insisted on being entirely competent to manage their own lives. Self-management proved to be in the interest of self-aggrandizement. It violated all the principles of true religion and made every person a law unto himself. False prophets cried "All's well" as long as they got their share, but by God's decree, "night settled on their vision." Thus were they "shamed because no answer came from God."

It did not take Micah, the true prophet of God, long to diagnose the contemporary situation. "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." It takes him only four verses (3:9-12) to tell the story of the apostasy of God's ancient people and to make clear that God's judgments

are operative. Man's rebellion against God involves him in ruin. The acquisitions of godless living have this astonishing description: "Once the prize of faithless living, now the prey of faithless foes."

What moral encouragement it yields to know that God will not stand for human depravity. No scoundrel can buy God off. Judges may be bribed, ministers of religion may prove false, business men may become racketeers, but the Supreme Being of the universe is eternally righteous and eternal love. So while God has a controversy with his apostate people and arraigns and indicts them, how moving is the way God goes at it. "My people, what have I done to you? Tell me, how have I injured you? Did I not bring you up from Egypt's land? Did I not set you free, etc. Ah, remember it all from first to last, . . . that you may understand the Eternal's saving power."

God's ancient people could not plead ignorance to explain or justify or excuse their social lawlessness and spiritual degeneration. The whole system of Mosaism was calculated to make God's ancient people the servant of God in the field of international life and relations. The Old Testament prophets, who rang true, proved to be organs of Divine revelation, making known the wonders God made possible in the life of his chosen people and for which he would hold them responsible. It is thrilling to contemplate the lovely human brotherhood which was to characterize the nation of God's elect and God's aim to get the whole world in on it. To see a group of go-getters take over, when God's provision is all for producing a race of sharers, with jubilee years for marvelous social readjustments, is surely supreme tragedy, the fatal issue of self-willed behaviour.

The Divine purpose for man is "Divine altruism." Man prefers secular idealism. But secular idealism always degenerates into vulgar egoism. When it does, God steps in as Judge. But here, too, we must keep close to Micah. God's historical judgments are redemptive, not final, as far as the total situation is concerned. Individuals sin away their day of grace. A person can get to a point where he is for all practical purposes beyond redemption. "One day they shall cry to the Eternal, but He will never heed them" (3:4ff). This is a red light, intended to snap unheeding evil-doers out of their brazenness. But God does not intend evil-doers to have the last word. His judgments on sin are redemptive. Micah predicts Redeemer and Redemption. It is all too wonderful for words. Even war is destined to become a thing of the past.

"O Bethlehem, tiniest of townships, out of you a king shall come to govern. His power shall extend to the ends of the earth," So prophesied Micah. The king

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came. "God so loved that he gave" this sin-stricken world a king who proved to be Divine Redeemer. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." He incarnated the self-giving love of God. He had and he gave what it took to redeem us from our sins. God judges sin, but he is not through yet as Redeemer. Ancient Israel paid for its apostasy. So modern Europe. So younger Christian America. Micah teaches that, when God's people go too far out of hand, "the Eternal descends from his place" with appropriate doom. It is well to heed the woes against the godless pronounced by Micah.

The modern message of this ancient prophet stresses the kind of life which is acceptable to God. "O man, he has told you what is good; what does the Eternal ask from you but to be just and kind and live in quiet fellowship with your God?" There is no substitute for ethical living and no meeting of God's requirements without ethical living. God will never be a partner in man's iniquity. "How shall I enter the Eternal's presence?" No one will make it who is laden with the spoils of iniquity. No one will get there who thinks he can bribe God. "Nay, nay; I will be striking you with ruin for your sins." When one comes in penitence, he will soon have reason to say, "Who is a God like thee—forgiving sins . . . delighting to be merciful?"

The prophet Micah had what we would call today a Christian philosophy of life. He knew not only the character and purpose of God, but that God has a definite plan for this sinful world. History seems to have only a human side, to be the record of man's achievements and progress. As a record of man's doings it is also a record of sin and failure. But there is a Divine side to human history. As such it is the story of a Divine crusade of redemption, the record of God's redemptive judgments on man's rebellion against God. Through prophets like Micah, God presses his controversy with his apostate people. The controversy begins with accusation, goes on to pronouncement of judgments, but ends on the redemptive note of promise.

Micah's prophecy also discloses the wonder of God's plan for making his chosen people significant. God's redeemed people are shown to be not only recipients of his saving grace, but it is made clear that they are

also to be channels of God's saving plan to others, in fact, to the world. It lifts a life to heights of realized meaning to experience that one is personally the object of an eternal plan of salvation and then to receive the astonishing commission to consecrate life as a channel for the further carrying out of that Divine plan.

Such mercy and grace on God's part show up sin and apostasy for what it is. Micah sounds the challenge of God's love. While it is made clear that the apostasy of passing generations cannot thwart God's redeeming purpose and plan, it is also clear that God's redemptive work is channeled through redeemed persons. God is therefore always seeking to bring his apostate people to repentance so that they may still be not only objects but channels of his saving power.

What honor and privilege, what responsibility and challenge, what astonishing grace makes a Christian the salt of the earth and the light of the world! How can God's people stoop so readily to frustrating selfishness when such weighty facts induce to an integrating consecration? The grace of personal salvation should prove sufficient to inspire every redeemed life to utmost and whole-souled loyalty. Micah told God's apostate people in his day that because they had lived by the policies of the unregenerate world, they would bear the derision of pagans. Are the united nations and is America free from the derision of pagans? Shall we continue to rely on commercial diplomacy and war preparation for security? The God of Micah sounds the challenge of redeeming love. The only imperative motto today must be: America for God and the world for Christ! The choice is between ruin and redemption. Micah stresses a promise of Redeemer and Redemption, but always that those, who are on the receiving end, live and pass on God's planned salvation for a lost world.

One who serves as God's prophet today cannot but be deeply moved by the difference between Micah and the false prophets of his day. When Micah saw that "doom descends from the Eternal," what was his reaction? Did he laugh it off? Did he make light of it? Here is what Micah said and did: "I will bewail this and lament, I will go barefoot and unclad, howling like a jackal, wailing hoarsely like an ostrich." He had to tell people their sins but he could only do it with tears. The prophet Micah felt the colossal and tragic self-injury wrought by man's sin and rebellion against God. He cried his heart out. What if the new day for our modern world is also to be preceded by howling and wailing among the prophets of God now serving! Micah wept over Samaria and Jerusalem. Jesus wept, too. O God, give to us, thy servants today, strong crying and tears.

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# The Novel as a Religious Experience

JOHN W. HOLLENBACH

Recently a questionnaire came across my desk in which one of the questions asked was, "What kind of religious experiences, aside from public worship and Bible study, is your college providing for its students?" The question bothered me at the time, and has continued to bother me. Because of it, this paper came to be written.

Every moment of our lives we are receiving from the world around us. Those impacts we call experiences. Since they flow unceasingly and since they leave imprints upon us, slight as they may seem at the time, we are not the same from one moment to another. In other words, all experiences have significance for our lives and affect our character. Consequently, it is important that these experiences be the right ones—that is, such as will help us to become more like the ideal which we establish as our goal. Every parent and every teacher is aware of this need—if only partially—as is evidenced by his attempts to order the world around his children or students, to place before them certain books or pictures or examples, to put them into certain situations or environments, to surround them with certain companions called "good," or certain ideas called "true," or certain things called "beautiful." Yet every intelligent parent or teacher is also aware of the mystery of life, whereby the same book or situation or companion will have a totally different effect upon two individuals. For the one, the impact received through the contact with a certain aspect of the natural universe or of the mind and art of man may be a deeply religious experience; whereas for the other the impact may be not only casual but devoid of any religious significance. The experiences of some soldiers in fox holes have been moments of great religious conversion; for others, the same external circumstances with the attendant blood, suffering, and destruction have served to help warp and destroy religious convictions. Even those sources of experience which are designed to move the individual in a certain direction often have the opposite effect. In his *Autobiography* Benjamin Franklin tells of how some books against deism, really a series of sermons intended to refute the arguments of the deists and proclaim the orthodox Protestant theology, fell into his hands. Says he, "It happened that they wrought an Effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them: for the arguments of the Deists which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much Stronger than the Refutations. In short I became a thorough Deist." Stephen, with the "face of an angel" and a tongue that spoke warmly and eloquently of the truth of Christ, served to convert many, but his speech and action moved others to gnash their teeth and eventually to stone him.

How then can one determine what areas of contact with the world of phenomena and ideas will, without fail, become Christian experiences for someone else? The conclusion that seems inevitable is that any book, any environment, and life situation which is placed before a student can be a religious experience, or quite the opposite. It all depends upon the individual. The history of the religious experiences of many men con-

firm that, of a truth, the ways that have led men to God are of infinite variety. Perhaps one justification for the broad base of study that forms the liberal arts program in the Christian college lies herein. Recognizing the uniqueness of the individual, and the unfathomable ways whereby spiritual truth is made known to man, the Christian college provides a wide variety of experiences, any one of which may be the avenue or an additional avenue for the student to discover the spiritual truths which lead to God.

If we were to stop there in our thinking, then the answer to the questionnaire would read simply, "All of the curricular and extracurricular program of the College provides, at least potentially, religious experiences for the student." There is real merit in this answer but it does not completely satisfy. If all experiences equally are potentially religious, then any college program no matter what it includes is equally religious, and no college can be said to be irreligious. The falseness of this conclusion lies in the word "equally." If, on occasion, a student coming in contact with the Bible or with a group of worshipping persons has reacted violently against them, on many more occasions students coming in contact with the same sources have been impelled toward the world of the spirit. Out of the long history of human experience, some situations and environments and books and types of human beings have proved to exercise more positive religious influence than others. The Bible, of course, is the supreme example. Not far behind are the men and women of faith and principle whose lives have left an indelible mark on those with whom they came in contact. A third source of tremendous power has been the world of nature. A fourth has been the minds of sensitive, brooding, imaginative men as they have found expression in books, in art, in music, and in other creations. As a teacher of literature, it is perhaps natural that I am interested in this area of books as an avenue for religious experience, and especially the type of writing called literature. For the purpose of discussion I would like to focus my comments on literature and center them especially upon the literary form called the *novel*.

As Emerson points out, the theory of books is a noble one. A thinking man, experiencing the life about him and brooding over it, arrives at some concept of the significance or meaning of life in one or more of its aspects. This he considers truth, and he seeks to put down his impression in words that will live. The aspect of life may vary, but the process he uses in arriving at his impression or interpretation is in general the same. From the multitude of phenomena and occurrences that spread out in infinite variety before him, he discerns similarities and patterns, he decides relative importance, he generalizes. In other words, he gives the raw material of life meaning. The scientist generalizes from his observation of the world of phenomena. The autobiographer seeks to put in words a true picture of himself gained from a reflection upon his past deeds and their motives. The biographer tries to present the truth about some other personality that once lived.

Since the task of the latter two involves the analysis of human motives in all their complexity, it is very difficult indeed. It is little wonder that they succeed only partially, in presenting the truth. The psychologist and sociologist enlarge their field to include the patterns of behavior of many and upon these conclusions—themselves generalizations—they generalize further. They too have a difficult task and are only partially successful. The philosopher looking outward and inward seeks to draw from the generalization of scientist, biographer, and social scientist further generalizations, this time about the significance and meaning of life—and he too hopes to arrive at the truth. He has a difficult time also, perhaps more so than the others, for he is trying to arrive at more universal truth, the truths of the spirit that lie beneath or beyond the world of phenomena and human behavior. It is little wonder that he only succeeds partially.

What then does the artist do—and as we are concerned primarily with one species of art—what does the novelist do? Since "fiction" is often thought of as being the opposite of "truth," some there are who would say that he cannot be included with these others. They at least are seeking the truth, whereas in the very nature of his task, the novelist is creating people that never existed and situations that never occurred. It is true, of course, that some novelists create and people a world unlike anything seen on land or sea, and quite counter to their own deepest concepts of the true pattern of existence. But what needs to be remembered is that in the final analysis, the intent of many novelists, those whom I would call serious novelists, is identical with that of the sincere biographer, the objective scientist and social scientists, and even the earnest philosopher. The serious novelist too is trying to put into words his impressions of truth about some aspect of life. It may be the aspect of physical nature, human nature, group behavior, or spiritual values. What characterizes the work of the novelist and sets him apart from his fellow truth seekers is the method he uses in expressing his truth in words. Like the biographer, the serious novelist is normally concerned with examining the phenomena of life, especially as they help him to understand the characteristics of individual personalities. Like the sociologist, psychologist, and scientist the serious novelist often distills his individual impressions and conclusions into larger generalizations. Like the philosopher, he frequently relates these generalizations to the ultimate questions of the meaning and purpose of life and the values whereby man lives or should live. But, unlike all of the others, the novelist does not stop here. Rather, he does what at first appears to be a curious thing. He reverses the process of his thinking, and by calling to his aid his fertile imagination, he proceeds from the general back to the particular. The others are primarily concerned with moving from the concrete to the abstract, from the illustration to the principle, from life to truth. The serious novelist, having done this, now proceeds to reclothe his truth in the garment of life. His task then includes another step, in itself extremely complex and difficult. And, like the others, he too very often fails. Sometimes, like the others he fails because he is not a keen enough observer of life itself, so that his generalizations lack validity. Sometimes, like the others, he fails because his reflective powers themselves

are limited by inadequate practice, or by prejudice, or by the twisting force of heredity and environment. Sometimes, unlike the others, he fails because his power of imagination is not strong enough and ingenious enough to invent and clothe his reflections and impressions in a consistent, life-breathing fable or myth. It is with him as with the biographer, psychologist, sociologist, scientist, or philosopher. All books are great in direct proportion to the extent that their authors have succeeded in transmuting life into truth. But for the novelist alone the following phrase must be added: and of re-creating life that *powerfully* illustrates these truths.

For an understanding of the need for including illustrations of creative art, including the novel, among the variety of religious experiences that are important for all men, the word "powerfully," used in the sentence above, provides the key. Matthew Arnold in several of his essays touches upon the twin urges that exist in man. One is the urge for knowing and the other the urge for doing in the light of one's knowledge. The Greeks, he argues, had a passion for the former, to the ultimately fatal neglect of the moral passion needed to make their knowledge predominate. In the ancient Hebrews the latter urge was dominant, at times at the expense of the search for light. Arnold's concept of the good life lay in the keeping of both these urges strong but in balance. Socrates, in the *Symposium*, likewise placed the search for ultimate beauty, which merges into the highest truth, as the great goal of man, but he too recognized at the same time the importance of a life lived in accord with the highest perceived truth, as his life and death demonstrate. The Christian concept of the purpose of life likewise is bound up in the same twain: the constant search for a better understanding of God, who embodies the highest truth, beauty, and goodness; and the incessant striving to live according to one's glimpses of this ultimate. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

Now in seeking to provide those experiences which will help the student to discover the highest truths, it would seem obvious that, in using books as sources, the best are those containing the greatest words of wisdom; and within those books the best portions are those passages in the Bible "God is love" or the two great commandments on which Christ himself declared "hang all the law and the prophets." Yet, strangely enough, or perhaps not so strangely, considering that man is far from being either a purely rational being or a purely spiritual being, these and other of the most profound statements that have been put into words often are not powerful enough—or perchance they are too powerful—to lodge in the minds and hearts of many individuals. Rare is the person who is capable of looking upon truth or beauty "bare."

Here then lies one of the great religious functions of the serious artist. It is his art to bring these great abstractions closer to the world of the senses, to embody them in the flesh of human experience—in other words to bridge the gap between the reader and his own vision of the truth by using concrete detail drawn from the stream of life. Jesus, the master teacher, fully understood this principle of learning and used with telling effect the device of fiction in his numerous parables. In fact, the coming of Christ to earth, "The Word made flesh," points the same lesson. Plato recognized the



values of the fictional approach, and couched many of his aphorisms and philosophic reflections in the framework of a set of dramatic dialogues with the characters of Socrates and his followers as the center, a device partly biographical, it is true, but embellished and pointed by his own imagination. John Milton wrote an extended prose treatise entitled *Christian Doctrine* which contained most of the ideas on the nature of God, the nature and purpose of man, and the nature of the universe which he wove also into his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*. The *Christian Doctrine* is a forgotten book, except by a few Milton scholars; whereas *Paradise Lost* has touched and continues to touch the minds of many, many men and to stir them to further search for the ultimate truth of God.

In addition to this function of rousing the intellect or even of pointing out spiritual truths in a manner that men can and do comprehend them, creative works, including the novel, often perform a second function. By touching the emotions, and by driving home truths already apprehended to the point that they reach the springs of action, many a poem or novel or painting has helped Christian believers to bring their lives to conform more nearly with their highest beliefs. Thomas De Quincey, in *The Poetry of Pope* divided all of writing into the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The function of the former is to teach; the function of the latter is to move. The two are not necessarily discrete, but the literature of power has as its aim instilling the love of truth. It arouses our affections and stirs our wills. To this group belongs the novel. This appeal to the emotion is a function of all art. Browning has his roguish painter, Fra Lippo Lippi say,

For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love  
First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times not cared to see;  
And so they are better, painted—better to us,  
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;  
God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the novel form in English was developing, many Protestant religious leaders, perhaps because they recognized the peculiar capacity of a well told story to arouse the emotions and perhaps also because a number of the early novels were racy and even salacious, labelled the form of writing called the novel a product of the devil. Some vestiges of this unwarranted generalization, unfortunately, still exist. Even more widespread has been the suspicion of the novel handed down from the utilitarian era of late eighteenth century America. According to this group, since the novel after all is only fiction and not fact, it does not give any information about the real world and real life, and as such is simply a waste of time. It is true today, as in an earlier day, that any novel can do harm as well as good. The same is true of all pieces of writing. It is also true that some novels, in fact a great many, have been, at best, a waste of time for the great majority of their readers; at worst, a large number have done considerably more harm than good. What needs to be added, however, is that many novels, like the *Dialogues* of Plato and *Paradise Lost* of Milton, do contain such profound insights into life, reaching to the spheres of moral and spiritual truth, and do present them in such forceful ways, that they have proved to be

and can continue to be a tremendous resource for the person who is dissatisfied with his present stage of Christian belief and behavior.

On my desk as I write is a book just off the press entitled *A Reading of Moby Dick* by M. O. Percival. As its title suggests it gives one man's interpretation of the meaning of this century-old novel about whales and whaling, and his reflections on that meaning. This volume brings to seven the number of books written about *Moby Dick* and its author, Herman Melville, within the last two and a half years. As for the articles on the subject, their number is becoming almost legion. In the collection of *Best Short Stories* of 1943, there appeared a tale that used a grim variation of the "what-book-would-you-take-along-on-a-desert-island?" theme. Of the four books deemed most priceless by the two lonely survivors of a third world war that saw the complete destruction of western civilization, *Moby Dick* was one. I mention these facts merely to point out that *Moby Dick*, a piece of imaginative writing called a novel, has impelled many men to active thinking and even to the more difficult task of spelling out in writing for themselves and others the significance of the work. If I were to list other literary works of comparable challenge to so many, I would have to turn to such world classics as *The Divine Comedy*, *Hamlet*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Faust*. I can but add my personal testimony as to the effect on me of reading and re-reading *Moby Dick*.

It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to disentangle with any certainty the web of cause and effect in one's life and to decide what experiences were the most significant in developing his religious beliefs and sensitizing his conscience. Nevertheless, some experiences do loom larger than others even in long retrospect, which often changes immediate impressions. Among these, one of the most significant has been my reading of Melville's tale, presenting the mad quest for revenge by the demoniac Captain Ahab as he drove his motley crew over the seven seas in search of the great white whale, *Moby Dick*. It is a stirring yarn, peopled with a group of striking, compelling people. There is the cannibal Queequeg, humorous and heroic, his skin a purplish-yellow, spotted with large blackish squares, his head bald except for a single scalp knot. And the powerful, philosophical American Indian, Tashtego, harpooner extraordinary. And the pitiful little Pip, the frightened negro cabin boy, his reason finally dismantled by the scarifying experiences he undergoes. And the second mate, Stub, happy-go-lucky, fatalistic, who "presided over his whale boat as if the most deadly encounter were but a dinner and his crew all invited guest," with his short, black pipe as much a part of his face as his nose. Above all, there is the brooding, awesome Captain Ahab, his wooden leg planted in its hole on the quarter-deck, nursing his unquenchable hatred of the whale and the nameless force behind the whale which has wounded him and insulted his power. The most apparent quality one feels immediately about the book is the impelling vigor and sweeping imagination which the author succeeded in channeling into a fable or myth that is equal to the scope and depth of the reflections and impressions of life that he wishes to convey.

It was not only imaginations that Melville drew upon, however, but a fund of rich personal experience and very wide reading. Melville was at home on the sea.

He had shipped as a seaman on a whaler more than once. He had traveled the seven seas in the forecabin, living close to all types of humanity. He had, too, the tremendous sensitivity which Henry James felt was the first prerequisite of a novelist. He was a person "on whom nothing is lost." Furthermore, like Dante and Milton and Goethe, he had that insatiable quest for knowing that drove him to range widely in the written records of man. Before writing *Moby Dick* he read all the books and treatises on whales and whaling that he could uncover. His knowledge, in fact, was so encyclopedic that it spilled over constantly into the novel, so much so that some have come to look upon *Moby Dick* as an encyclopedia on the subject of whales and whaling.

All of these qualities of imagination, receptivity, and scholarship, especially in the degree found in this novel, contribute to the total impact of the work. However, we come closer to the real fascination of the book for the mature reader when we discover, almost from the first page, that here is a man with a mind that is quick to see relationships, to catch the unseen in the seen, to move from the known to the unknown, I might even say, to the unknowable. In spite of the great mass of information about whales which Melville had absorbed and then presented again in his book, there is little feeling that this is a simple regorging of matter. Somehow, all comes out leaving indelibly the impress of the mind of Melville. For example, there is the chapter in which Melville vividly describes the whale line which folds the whole whale boat "in complicated coils, twisting and writhing around it in almost every direction," and the terror that strikes to the marrow of the neophyte sailor, straining at the oar, not knowing at what instant the harpoon may be darted and

all these horrible contortions be put in play like ringed lightning. Yet habit—strange thing, what cannot habit accomplish? Gayer sallies, more merry mirth, better jokes and brighter repartee you never heard over your mahogany than you will hear over the half inch white cedars of the whale boat when thus hung in hangman's nooses.

Here we see Melville's mind at work, moving from the scene itself to the reflection on the effect or lack of effect on human behavior. But he is not yet finished. His needs must carry this process one step further and make of this episode a symbol of life itself:

But why say more? All men live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the subtle, ever-present perils of life.

Illustrations of this quality of Melville's mind and writing could be multiplied almost endlessly. I mention only two others: first, the section on the tiny (relatively speaking) eye of the whale, which leads Melville to the penetrating corollary, "Why then do you try to enlarge your mind? Subtilize it;" and secondly, the chapter on the whiteness of the whale, which, after developing the paradoxical thesis of the purity and the hideousness of the color white, propounds therefrom the riddle of good and evil.

This last illustration hints at what a reading of the entire book will bear out, namely, that the book as a whole is more than a description or an adventure story. It means something more. It is Melville's way of revealing his brooding and partial answers to the most

profound questions of man's existence: the nature of man, his place in the cosmos, and his relation to the infinite. Examine all the great literary masterpieces and it becomes evident that they all touch upon one or more of these problems. It is this quality, along with the power of invention, which must be found in a work of art if it is to be labelled great.

What is Melville's reading of life as revealed in this novel? The answer is too complex for much discussion here. One point may prove illustrative. Like a fugue running through the book is the symbolism of the sea and the land. Near the beginning of the book, we meet a tall sailor named Bulkington at the Spouter Inn. He has just landed from a harrowing four-year voyage. A few days later, when the ship *Pequod* leaves Nantucket, Ishmael, who comes closest to being Melville's mouthpiece in the novel, starts when he sees this same Bulkington at the wheel. Why should he fly the safety and comfort of the port, of the warm safe land, to return to the lashed sea's landlessness? Ah, here is fruit for meditation and allegory:

Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore.

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so better is it to perish in that howling infinite than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety. For worm-like, then, oh! who would craven crawl to land?

Gathering together other comments and reflections, one must inevitably conclude that Melville is warning against bowing to the goals of comfort and security, and even the easy, sure belief in a dogmatic religious creed—as symbolized by the shore or land. These are the enticements that enslave the intrepid soul of man, that make him less than God-like. In the restless, eternal search of man, Melville indicates, lies his greatest glory, even though that search leads, or seems to lead to an ultimate truth that is ghastly. What gives the novel its passionate, tragic undertone is that sense of uncertainty about the nature of God which prevents the novel from taking its place beside *The Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost* as positive and lyric expressions of faith in the God Jehovah as all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving. Melville was struggling for the vision and the faith, almost desperately. Others around him in the mid-nineteenth century had caught visions of the infinite that to them were supremely rewarding, in spite of the misery of mankind in their own day. At times, as in the opening section with its powerful sermon on Jonah preached by the seaman parson, there seems to be a hard-won faith. Father Mapple is shown as a preacher who has struggled mightily with the same problem, who has tried to escape the "other and more awful lesson" which Jonah and his own experience had taught him: the necessity of preaching the truth, no matter how terrible, in the face of falsehood. Father Mapple's sermon does end on a triumphant note, a ringing proclamation that there must be an ultimate reward for those who preach thus, even though the martyrdom required is hard to understand. "I leave eternity to Thee; for what is man that he should live out the lifetime of his God," says Father Mapple in submission, as he closes his sermon.

But if this was the faith of Melville, it was none too firmly settled. At other times in the novel, dark doubts seem to creep in as he observes man and as he observes nature.

Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes. . . . Consider once more the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.

Perhaps it is this very uncertainty which gives the book its brooding intensity, and which challenged me to take a deeper look into my own religious convictions. This paper has developed the thesis that a great deal depends upon the individual as to whether an experience has a positive or a negative effect upon one's Christian belief and practice. I am certain that my reading of *Moby Dick* has been a profound religious experience, bringing a fuller appreciation of the equality of man before God, a deepening of my feeling of the need for compassion, and a humbling sense of the limitation of unaided human understanding in arriving at the ultimate truth.

A novel like *Moby Dick* whose basic meaning does not coincide in several ways with the main stream of the Protestant world view is not a substitute for writings which bear the more direct imprint of Christian belief.

It lacks many insights necessary for the complete development of a reader's knowledge of Christian values and tenets. However, I have dwelt deliberately upon this novel rather than one that more completely and directly points out the Christian message in order to illustrate anew the impact for good that such a novel can have to the thoughtful reader who recognizes it for what it is—the reflections of a sensitive, brooding man who has some things of value to tell us. To him who is well grounded in the Book of Books, and who has learned to read widely, in fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, this book is likely to be a profound religious experience. If we can believe the testimony of the great Christian poet Dante, one of the great resources which helped him on the road to faith and virtue was the writing of the pagan Latin poet, Virgil. St. Augustine too in his *Confessions* credits another pagan philosopher, Cicero, with playing the important initial role of turning him from his life of profligacy toward an acceptance of Christ.

In evaluating its program in the light of the question which served as the starting point for this paper, it seems then not unreasonable to conclude that the Christian liberal arts college in deciding what areas of human experience are most likely to help students grow in their religious faith and practice should not overlook the literature of power—and that includes the novel—as an important resource upon which to draw.

## The Individual In Kierkegaard

JOHN A. VANDER WAAL

Soren Kierkegaard's individual is, in the words of Unamuno, "the unanswerable argument of eternity against duration." Our purpose is to relate this category of spiritual awakening, i.e., the individual, to three specific realms to indicate thereby the decisive position occupied by the individual in the over-all outlook of Kierkegaard. The first realm is that of truth in which it will be discovered that truth consists in the subjective relationship of the existing individual, and that eternal truth is paradoxical when it is brought into the medium of existence. The second is that of existence proper, and the description of the individual in existence will be set forth. The third and final realm is that which is of absolute interest to the individual, namely, his relationship to Christianity. Such a delineation of the subject may present an adequate portrayal of the individual as Kierkegaard conceived of him and of that individual which it is every man's privilege and duty to become.

### The Individual and Truth

The era of Kierkegaard congratulated itself upon its attainment of truth. Hegel had discovered that history was the process of the self-realization of the Absolute in time, and Nature was the unfoldment of the Absolute in space. Little doubt remained among the intellectualists that thought and reality were not united. The real was the rational. In "the System" Christianity was neither excluded nor ignored. On the contrary, it was seen to be necessary to the evolution of the World-Idea. The decisive categories of Christianity were given a snug place in the huge structure of speculative thought

constructed by the idealists. The age had arrived!

To this optimistic age Kierkegaard addressed stern words of rebuke. In their stress upon objective, abstract truth and in their role as spectators to the world-drama, men had overlooked the personal, subjective nature of truth and had ignored their inescapable role of being actors, not only onlookers, in life. Maximum objectivity in the knowing process had been the goal and it had made little difference whether the thing known affected a man's own way of life at all. Kierkegaard, in sharp contrast to such a dispassionate attitude, believed it to be his first requisite to find a truth which was truth for him, an idea for which he was willing to live and die.<sup>1</sup> This truth is of such a nature that we can never be objectively certain of it. It qualifies itself as truth precisely because of that aspect, namely, its objective uncertainty. We possess truth when in intense, passionate inwardness we cling to something which can never be proved to us as objectively true. Our relationship to truth is one of subjective appropriation.

What is the application of this revolutionary concept of truth with regard to God? If truth is subjectivity, can there be real knowledge of God? The possibility of such knowledge is quite vehemently denied. The idea of natural, rational knowledge of God is nothing less than a contradiction in terms, an absurdity. God is always the subject in a faith-relationship; he is never the object of a knowledge-relationship. God cannot be objectively known, though all eternity be used in the search for him. Karl Barth has only disdain for at-

tempts at a theology built upon natural revelation. He seems to be at least partially indebted to Kierkegaard for the lead to this attitude.

One may suspect that he is here being confronted with a re-statement of the traditional difference between historical and saving faith. That this is not the case must become evident when we examine the matter more closely. Historical faith is the belief in certain truth *about* God, his existence, his work in history, etc. These beliefs are supposedly grounded in perfectly rational evidence. There is no good reason why one should not believe them. For Kierkegaard, however, both the existence of God and his work in history are paradoxical. The Incarnation itself is the absolute paradox. A man may believe that God does exist and that he does work in history, but so far as rational supports for such beliefs are concerned, there simply are none. Look now at saving faith. In the traditional sense such faith implies the subjective appropriation and application of objectively *certain* truths and facts. Saving faith, for Kierkegaard, consists in an intensive inwardness in holding fast objectively *doubtful* truths. This makes faith an infinitely dangerous venture. It is precisely because of this ever present element of risk involved in faith that the individual can never become complacent in and assured of his faith. Kierkegaard is here warning Christendom of the dangers involved in the assumption that men are, without doubt, the possessors of established and certain faith.

The paradoxical aspect of truth has already been touched upon. The hopes of rational man throughout history have been staked upon the intuition that the human mind is capable of ascertaining reality, and that this reality can be rationally defined. Kierkegaard teaches that man's existence acts as a barrier to separate him from such truth as lends itself to being placed in a so-called system of reality. For us thinking men the essence of truth is paradoxical. Truth may not be paradoxical in itself but when we attempt to think it, at once it becomes so. Our attempts to think the truth are really quite absurd for we attempt to think thoughts that thought cannot think! Our existence is to blame for our predicament, but our concern about our concrete existence is not to be sacrificed for the doubtful pleasure of thinking without paradox.

Kierkegaard initiated a revolt in the concept of truth, one that has continued to this day, and has made him the precursor of contemporary crisis-thought, both in philosophy and theology. Truth is not discovered through systematic application of the philosophical reason to reality. This opens the way, negatively, for revelation which, in defiance of the optimistic reason, yields the truth necessary to man's salvation. The truth of revelation is not conceived of as being supplementary to what is accessible to man's natural reason but rather as being antithetical and contradictory to it. Is there an approach here to Tertullian's "*credo quia absurdum*?" Only superficially so. Kierkegaard is reacting to an optimistic age during which man's confidence in his rational faculties had reached its zenith, and he demands of his age a return to the reality of an absolute and uncompromising revelation.

#### The Individual and Existence

The glaring sin of the first half of the nineteenth century was that men had forgotten their own personal

existence. Identification with and participation in the world-historical process were thought of as constituting the highest goal for the individual. Concrete existence was no longer taken seriously and the thought occurred to nobody that to exist as a person might be a greater challenge than to think as an intellectualist. Kierkegaard acted as the gadfly to the Danish people, reminding them once again to examine their own existence.

What does it mean to exist? It means more than to be merely alive. The word "life" has romantic, sentimental, and even biological associations and is not to be used as a synonym for "existence." Kierkegaard defines existence most succinctly as a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and therefore as a constant striving. Students of Kierkegaard have interpreted this definition variously. One says that existence is that attitude toward life which faces the future. To exist means at a particular moment to express the eternal in time.<sup>2</sup> Another claims that existence is that which does not admit of explanation. There is something about us that simply is, which is always subject and never object.<sup>3</sup> Still another believes that existence implies not the calm of being but the conflict of becoming; not life in the abstract, but conditioned human life lived in the tension of reality.<sup>4</sup> The interpretations here presented suffice to show that existence is not the matter-of-fact thing it has been made out to be. Although existence is ordinarily regarded as no very complex matter, much less an art, it now appears that really to exist, so as to interpenetrate one's existence with consciousness, is truly difficult. A man's existence is an encounter of time and eternity which constitutes this man, and which will never be repeated, though the world should stand forever. The existing, subjective individual is involved in a process of infinite striving that does not reach the goal as long as the individual exists. Man's highest interest is his existence, and he has no right to abstract himself from his chief concern.

The individual can exist in one of three stages or "ways of life." They are the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. These are alternative views of life rather than successive stages through which the individual is to progress. Each stage is marked by passions that are qualitatively different from those that determine the other two. The transition between the various stages cannot be effected by reflection but must be accomplished by a leap. The ethical and religious spheres are higher than the aesthetic, but the change from a lower to a higher stage is never the necessary consequence of a preceding development. The border line stages between the aesthetic and ethical and the ethical and religious are designated respectively as the ironical and the humorous. When the individual proceeds to a higher stage, he does not thereby abolish the enthusiasms that characterized the lower. He merely subordinates them to their proper place.<sup>5</sup>

A brief description of the aesthetic way of life reveals that it yields the most immediate enjoyment to the individual. It is thus invested with a certain attractiveness which is not easily overlooked. The aesthetic life must not be construed merely as the sensuous life for it may include much more than that. Broadly interpreted, one lives aesthetically when he seeks the meaning of life in and by his own personality.

The ethical stage of life, on the other hand, presup-



poses the background of a divine being. There is recognition of the eternal side of man's nature and the resolve to give it its just due.<sup>6</sup> In this way of life, it is assumed that the individual has the good within himself and that his highest task is to develop his fundamentally integral personality. The only absolute required of him is that he choose himself, and the consequence of so doing is the emergence of the ethical self.<sup>7</sup> Eventually the individual is able to find his way, through self-realization and achievement of the good, back to God.

The third and highest stage of existence which presents itself as a possibility to the existing individual is the religious. In this stage the individual personality is assumed to be invalidated and to be standing in need of a change. Resignation and passivity to the eternal and divine are needed in order that the desired change may be wrought.<sup>8</sup> From an attitude of total resignation the individual takes the leap of faith and enters into a positive relationship to life. A true God-relationship for the individual is possible only as he exists in the religious stage.

Insofar as his existence as a given something is concerned, it makes no difference in what stage the individual is living. Whatever his choice, when it comes to the matter of the sphere in which he lives, the individual is immersed in the conditions of his existence. If the individual loses himself in total pre-occupation in things irrelevant to his existence, he presents a somewhat comical, though pathetic, figure to behold. It is only as the individual takes his own existence seriously that he realizes the difficulties inherent in it. The art of existing as an individual may be illustrated by the figure of a team of horses consisting of a winged Pegasus and a worn-out jade.<sup>9</sup> The individual holds the reins and he is told to drive such a team. To exist as an individual is as precarious a task as to drive these horses side by side. Eternity is the winged horse and time is the worn-out jade and the individual is to hold them together. Becoming conscious of this task, he will certainly become conscious of what it means to exist.

#### The Individual and Christianity

The situation in the Christendom of Kierkegaard's day was both comical and ironical. It was comical because there was a great deal of talk about Christianity but little attempt to exist as a Christian. It was ironical because in the early days of Christianity being a Christian involved one in great difficulties and dangers, but now everyone was a Christian without experiencing any difficulty at all. In New Testament days the individual's introduction to Christianity involved decisive action of the whole self. When one became a Christian, he was aware that he was making a great transition. In Christendom the individual was born a Christian and usually remained one, not through decisive, personal commitment to Christianity, but simply as a matter of course. It was practically impossible not to be a Christian. In such ways the Apostolic Church and Christendom presented a series of contrasts.

Kierkegaard diagnosed "geographical Christendom," noticed the severity of contrast between what the Church once was and what it now is, and concluded that Christendom has done away with Christianity, without being quite aware of it. Christendom was the victim of the prodigious illusion that all are Christians. His own task Kierkegaard evaluated as somewhat absolutely unique.

It was to revise the popular conception of what it means to be a Christian and, if possible, to try again to introduce Christianity into Christendom.

In the course of his own religious experience Kierkegaard came to distinguish between two types of religion. They were designated by him as Religion A and Religion B. These correspond to the two kinds of religious experience the individual may have. The gap between these two categories is not one to be crossed by gradual transition. The difference between the two types is not quantitative but qualitative and can be transcended only by a leap.

Religion A is best characterized by immanence. In this religion the individual is somehow still linked to the divine. Recollection and immanence play the prominent roles and such religion is independent of any historical situation.<sup>10</sup> Religion A is the religion of paganism not only, but of a generous portion of what usually passes for Christianity, and is, in fact, nothing more than religiousness. Christianity now becomes nothing more than a glorified paganism, for between this type of Christianity and other "high-quality religions" there is no essential difference.

Religion B, on the other hand, is distinguished by transcendence. Real Christianity is confined to this type of religion and is its only example. The individual is no longer linked to the divine (as in Religion A, which if accepted, leads directly to pantheism), but is totally severed from it. Since all continuity between man and God is disrupted, there is no gradual realization on behalf of the individual that he is eternal. God manifests himself from without, but in time, and not from within the individual.

Although these two forms of religion are not to be regarded as absolute and irreconcilable contraries, the man who is at all concerned about his relationship to Christianity must become aware of the distinction between them in order that he may subject his own existence as a Christian to careful scrutiny. Granting for the moment the truth of the hypothesis that much of what passes for Christianity is nothing more than Religion A, one senses that the situation of Christianity is crucial. Intense, personal reflection on the part of the individual Christian may reveal that he is actually existing as a glorified pagan. Kierkegaard is sharply critical of an aesthetic, speculative travesty of Christianity and of a religion which poses as real Christianity out of cowardice and complacency.

Kierkegaard's thinking about Christianity centers in the Incarnation for it is the historicity of the latter that sharply distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. The Athanasian dogma of Jesus Christ as very God and very man, though itself a baffling paradox, is the basis of our faith. The Incarnation, as the Absolute Paradox, emerges because God has united himself, not with humanity, but with one individual man. The historical assertion of the Incarnation differs from all other historical data because it is not something simply historical, but the historical which only against its nature can become such. Since God has entered into time, the individual encounters him, not in idea only, but in his actual existence. The truth that God has come into history as an individual man makes Christianity absolutely unique and is its focal point.

As a climax to the discussion of the individual and Christianity, the subject of becoming a Christian is *apropos*. How does a person become a Christian? The task is great enough in itself, but the difficulties are accentuated if the individual is already under the assumption that he is a Christian. In such an instance the individual is suffering from an illusion, and the first task is to remove the illusion. Entering Christianity will be an easier task for the individual who knows he is not a Christian than for the one who imagines he is a Christian but is not.

The essence of becoming a Christian for the individual lies in his response to the love of God. The Christian revelation is grounded in love and must be met by love on the part of the individual. In the reality of God's love the individual is both judged and forgiven. The responsive love of the individual believer is no mere emotion or sentiment. It is more than a specialized or exclusive love to one's neighbor for it is grounded in a command of God which has eternal validity, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The individual's God-relationship is essentially one of love and the man-God relationship thus sustained by the believer is qualitatively different from every other type of love. Love of God is decisive, and only when the individual loves God more than himself can he love his neighbor as himself. The Christian life is one of love and it means to love as Christ himself loved.

The individual who is in process of becoming a Christian is conscious of the distinction between religion-in-general and Christianity and will not attempt to mediate the paradox of Christianity. Realizing his "sickness unto death," which, paradoxically enough, does not permit him to die, he is confronted by the revelation of God in Christ as his only hope. Now, in the dialectical moment, he must take the leap of faith and in that leap his existence is transformed. The decisive element in the new life of the individual is love and the intensity and earnestness of that love produces suffering. No one acquires any real advantage in living in the twentieth century after Christ. Contemporaneity with Christ is still a necessity and the requirements for discipleship have neither been altered nor reduced. Becoming a full-fledged disciple of Christ is the lifelong task of the individual.

To summarize, in order to become a Christian a paradoxical transformation of existence is required, and this

is accomplished only by confronting the individual with the eternal in time outside himself. Thus, the actuality of the Incarnation, though it be paradoxical for thought, is precisely that which is needed if the individual is to obtain his highest good. The individual's reaction to the revelation of God in Christ may be one of offence or faith, and if the latter, that faith is at the same time a decisive choice of the will and a gift of God. Existing in faith, the individual recognizes the necessity of discipleship and of living as a witness to the truth. In the consciousness of existing as a sinner, in faith before God, the individual is on the way to becoming this particular man that God wills him to be.

In conclusion, perhaps the Christian world of today is not as complacent as the Christendom of Kierkegaard's day but that our age is also lacking in religious education, the type of which Kierkegaard imparts, and that many sentimental and childish notions of Christianity still prevail cannot be denied. And is the individual any more acutely aware of the gravity and wonder of his existence before God now than then? Kierkegaard lays each of us, as an existing individual, under the imperative of examining his own conscience and of awakening to the truth that your and my relationship to God is a private and delicate matter, so much so, in fact, that it cannot be expressed other than by a stern I/Thou. But above everything, the possibility of becoming that individual whom Kierkegaard prizes so dearly may be regarded by each one as the task his existence posits for him. It is, as Brandes has said, "the pearl of great price which Kierkegaard offered to his time." And we add thoughtfully, to our time as well.

1. Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 445.
2. R. Thorne, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 112.
3. E. L. Allen, *Kierkegaard: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1935), p. 154.
4. M. Channing-Pearce, *Soren Kierkegaard: A Study* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1945), p. 30.
5. David Swenson, *Something about Kierkegaard* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941), p. 163.
6. Edmund P. Clowney, Jr., "A Critical Estimate of S. Kierkegaard's Notion of the Individual," *The Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. V, Nov. 1942, No. 1, pp. 29-61.
7. R. Thorne, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
8. David Swenson, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
9. Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 276.
10. David Swenson, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

## Seminary Highlights

Examination week marked the close of another seminary year. For some it was the close of their seminary training, for others an opportunity for a summer's work among the churches. But for all it was the end of months of preparation that had been full, rich, and challenging.

Visitors on the chapel platform again brought a wide range of experience to the seminary. Those from the Holland area were, March 21, the Rev. John Hibma, '49, Byron Center, Michigan, March 30, the Rev. Joshua Hogenboom, '28, Holland, Michigan, April 19, Mrs. James Wayer, Holland, Michigan, and May 2, Mr. P.

MacDonald, director of the Monroe Street Branch of the Mel Trotter Mission in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Coming from a greater distance were, March 31, the Rev. Harri Zegerius, '36, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, April 18, the Rev. Spencer De Jong, '34, Chicago, Illinois, and, May 8, the Rev. Roderic Lee Smith, chaplain from the Ninth Naval District.

Dr. Albert Hyma, Professor of History at the University of Michigan, came to the seminary as a guest lecturer on March 28. He addressed the faculty and student body on the subject, "The Dutch Contribution to the Northern Renaissance and the Reformation, 1400-1575."

The Adelpia Society (student wives' organization) has concluded its study on "Missions," a series of meetings which were conducted by Mrs. James Wayer.

Recent meetings of the Adelpic Society have presented a variety of speakers and events. March 20 brought to a joint meeting with the Alpha Chi of Hope College, the Rev. Ralph Korteling, of our Arcot Mission. He presented a lecture and film strip of "Mission Work in India." On March 27, Dr. Louis H. Benes, '30, editor of the *Church Herald* held before the group the "Power of the Printed Page." April 3, the Rev. Harry Hoffs, '17, who is serving as a hospital chaplain in Grand Rapids, spoke on the subject, "Christ at the Clinic." April 17 the Adelpic attended the panel discussion on "Divorce" sponsored by the Particular Synod of Chicago at Hope Chapel. The last meeting of the year, April 24, was conducted by the Rev. Harland Steele, '47, Temple Time minister, who vividly portrayed the past, present, and future of "The Radio Ministry."

The Adelpic was host to the men of Calvin Seminary on April 10. The Calvin team proved to be master of the softball diamond in the afternoon. In the evening the Rev. Daniel Fylstra, '46, of Grand Rapids, addressed the combined group on "Evangelism." Refreshments and a social period closed the evening.

Twelve students from Western Seminary and the student body of New Brunswick Seminary met together at New Brunswick, New Jersey, April 12-15, for their second Interseminary Conference in two years. The theme of the conference was "The Nature and Destiny of the Seminarian." Specific topics discussed were, "The Seminarian and His Seminary," "The Seminarian and the Church," and "The Seminarian and the World." A full report of the event may be found in an article, "New Brunswick-Western Seminary Conference," *The Church Herald*, May 4, 1951, p. 17.

Professor Simon Blocker was host to the Senior Class on March 30 at Hope Church. Dr. and Mrs. Marion de Velder at the request of Professor Blocker conducted a wedding rehearsal.

Members of the Senior Class with their wives and friends were guests at a faculty dinner on May 1, at the American Legion Memorial Park near Holland. After the dinner, Mr. and Mrs. James VerMeulen showed pictures taken during their recent tour of Europe.

The annual spring banquet was held May 4 in the new Durfee Hall on the Hope College campus. After dinner and some good-natured fun by the students, the evening was closed on a high spiritual tone by Mr. Ekdal Buys of Grand Rapids who spoke on the ministry from the layman's point of view.

The Seminary Commencement Exercises were held Tuesday evening, May 15. The annual gathering of alumni took place in the afternoon and the alumni dinner was served in Trinity Church, Holland. After dinner

the group was addressed by the Rev. Bert Van Malsen, '31, of Lansing, Illinois. The Commencement address, "The Pulpit in the Parish," was delivered by Dr. Wynand Wichers, former president of Hope College, and now Vice President of Western Michigan College of Education.

In the weeks following Commencement, the Senior Class will disperse to these places of service:

Charles Botkin . . . Unassigned.

Glenn Bruggers . . . Under appointment of the Board of Foreign Missions to Japan.

Donald P. Buteyn . . . Jamestown Church, Jamestown, Michigan.

Wendell Chino . . . Under appointment of the Board of Domestic Missions to work among the Indians.

Chun Young Chang . . . Has returned to his native country, Korea.

Willard H. Curtis . . . Presbyterian Church, Cadillac, Michigan.

John C. Frey . . . Elim Church, Kings, Illinois.

Jack Hilbrands . . . Grand View Church, Armour, South Dakota.

William C. Hillemonds . . . First Church, Chatham, New York.

Russell E. Horton . . . First Church, Everly, Iowa.

B. Virgil Janssen . . . First Church, Sodus, New York.

Harold L. Kammeraad . . . Raritan Church, Raritan, Illinois.

Antonio Moncada . . . will return to his native country, Italy.

Harry P. Morehouse . . . Second Church, Marion, New York.

Wilson Duke Richardson . . . Pembroke Chapel, Wicher, Illinois.

LeRoy A. Sandee . . . Sandham Memorial Church, Monroe, South Dakota.

Garth Smith . . . Fennville Methodist Church, Fennville, Michigan.

Lubbert Van Dellen . . . American Church, Worthington, Minnesota.

Cornelius A. Vander Woude . . . Ada Church, Ada, Michigan.

Jack Van Dyken . . . Forest Grove Church, Forest Grove, Michigan.

Arthur O. Van Eck . . . Wyandotte, Michigan.

Elton L. Van Pernis . . . Byron Center Church, Byron Center, Michigan.

Ralph H. Van Rhee . . . Chancellor Church, Chancellor, South Dakota.

Robert J. Van Zyl . . . Faith Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Robert B. Wildman . . . Community Church, Hopkins, Michigan.

Samuel Williams . . . Brewton, Alabama.

## Book Reviews

*The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, by H. H. Rowley, London: Lutterworth Press, 1950. Pp. 184. 14s.

The subject of this book is one of the most magnificent of the teachings of the Revelation of God. The author makes a bold tour among the dizzy heights and dangerous depths of

the religious life of the chosen people in order to get a satisfying solution for the problem of this fundamental doctrine which is besieged by the antinomies of human thinking. Because of these antinomies, only the prophets and the apostles and very few religious geniuses were able to understand and to give an

acceptable explanation of predestination, this most inner truth of human life.

In this book we are informed of the results of the investigations made by a scholar for some years. In the first section entitled, "The Election of Israel," the author expressly declares that he will not deal "with the theological question of predestination to salvation or damnation." He remains as an investigator within the limits of religious historical investigation. But, from this viewpoint, he engages himself in a dispute concerning rational-liberal conceptions. Standing on the principle of revelation, he argues convincingly that the statements of the comparative-religious-historical schools about the election of Israel are untenable. Israel, not for her ability, not even for her faith in Yahweh, but "in her weakness and worthlessness was chosen. Israel's greatness lies in the fact that God chose her." This is indeed a Reformation idea. With regard to the beginning of the worship of Yahweh he holds both Biblical statements to be acceptable: first, Yahweh is the God of Israel from the time of Israel's sojourn in the land of Egypt (Hos. 12:9; 13:4) and, secondly, that he had already revealed himself to the Patriarchs (Gen. 15:7; 28:13, p. 25). The author thus turns away from the newest results of the discoveries revealed in the *Ras Shamra* texts. According to him, Yahweh is a Kenite-Midianite God worshipped by Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses (pp. 27, 28). In this point it would have been desirable to set forth the role and significance of the confederation of Israel's tribes without which the mission of Israel and the spread of Yahwism is unimaginable. We especially miss the exposition and connection of the names El Shaddai (Gen. 49:25) and El Elyon (Gen. 14:18) because the meaning of these names brings us closer to the understanding of the being of the God of the fathers (see H. Torczyner: *Die Bundeslade und die Anfänge der Religion Israels*, Berlin, 1922). His picture of the prophetic personality of Moses is right. The significance of God's man is measured, not by Israel as a nation, but by Israel as the congregation of the chosen. The basis of election is the *Grace of God*. This is a foundation of all existence, but the goal is instantly shown in the partial accentuation of grace at the cost of the righteousness of God, when he is influenced by different modern teachings of the "vessel of dishonour" (p. 41). This is a daring criticism of the sovereign will of God which is manifest in heaven and earth.

The second section gives "The Corollaries of Israel's Election." That is a description of the Covenant in which the chosen people fulfills her mission and serves Yahweh who delivered her from the bondage of Egypt. This deliverance as a witness of God's active love to his people is the basis of the Covenant made with Israel. Here the author tries to draw a parallel between the Covenant of faith (Abraham's Covenant) and the Covenant of love (made with Moses) without any analysis of the idea of the Covenant (in Hebrew: *berith*; in Greek: *borkia*). It is stated that the Covenant of Sinai by its nature is bilateral. From the side of God, it is grace manifested in historical facts, and from the side of Israel, it is a response of gratitude. Thus, it is unconditional and normally free. Of this fact it should follow that Israel according to her liberty can repudiate her election. There is, however, a discipline in the Covenant, and this is another corollary of election. The author's exposition of this discipline according to which grace is the motive of the behaviour of God to his disobedient people is not quite correct. It is true that election is based on grace but it is likewise true that the service of Israel must be rendered according to the ethical world order of God who is *just*. The motive of punishment is his *justicia*.

Punishment is an admonition that the saving power of the divine world order is righteousness. God will punish the sin of his chosen people because it is an *attack upon his ethical character and moral world order* (Gen. 15:6, Micah 6:8, Ex. 20:5, Is. 43:10; 42:6, especially Hos. 2:18, 19). In the same manner it is mistaken to distinguish between an "incipient" and "speculative" monotheism (p. 60). The religion of Israel is one unity having its heart in the Ten Commandments. But let us ask what kind of "speculation" could be found in the writings of the prophets? To speak of religious syncretism between the religion of the Patriarchs and of Moses is also unjust because both of them have the same characteristics; they are ethical and spiritual. Of course, there is another relation between the entirely spiritual Yahwism and the Baalism of polytheistic-naturalistic character.

In the third section an exposition is given of the "Limitation and Extension of Israel's Election." Here we find a characteristic of the prophetic writings. The prophets are not pessimists yet their prophecies are full of admonitions, scourgings, and proclamations of judgments against a disobedient Israel which rejected the will of God. The "great and fearful day of Yahweh" is a recurring idea which determined Israel's future life. There was, however, the Remnant of the chosen people, the heirs of election. The author, having given an historical recapitulation, proves that the thought of the Remnant is already to be found in the early life of Israel. "Here, so early, was the seed of the doctrine of the Remnant" (p. 71). This idea, however, is much earlier. It is to be found in the saving of Noah's family, "For thee have I seen righteous (*zaddiq*) before me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1) and in Abraham's intervention for the righteous in Sodom (Gen. 18:23). The problem of the Remnant is developed correctly through the writings of the canonical prophets who concerning election emphasized the "purification" (p. 78), the "restoration" of Israel, and the "spiritual power" (p. 79) by which this world will be conquered. In post-exilic Judaism, the idea of Remnant received new emphasis by the organization of synagogues. These institutions became the hotbed of the faith of gentle proselytes who accepted the sacred heritage in this way. But what is said by the author of the relation between Israel as a nation and the church (p. 86) is not correct. The mission of Moses was not to establish a "nation," but a kingdom of priests and a holy people, sacred host, who would live in the most intimate relation to Yahweh (Ex. 19:5, 6). In this portion an incongruous expression is also to be found. The prophecy of Micah (ch. 5) is called by the author an "oracle." But there is nothing in it of the essence and peculiarities of oracles. It is not divination by rods (Ez. 21:21), nor necromancy (1 Sam. 28:11-19), nor an oracle by dream (Gen. 37:5-11; 41:1-7), nor psychomancy with an ecstatic (unconscious) state of the mediator (1 Sam. 19:23, 24). The prophecy of Micah is not a divination, but a clear prophecy of eschatological character, the Micahian authority of which can be doubted from the point of view of a liberal rationalism (Cornill, Marti, Wellhausen, Nowack, Giesebrecht, etc.), but it was never deprived of its prophetic eschatological character. The prophecy itself also contradicts this statement, "I will cut off witchcraft out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers" (5:12). This is a true salvation-eschatology just as the last five verses of Amos' prophecy (9:11-15).

The fourth section dealing with "The Election of Individuals" (judges, prophets, priests) is used by the writer to show that election is not without condition; otherwise its significance would be diminished. Election is always given with a fixed condition for an individual being fit for a goal. In order to



serve this goal, the elected ones are equipped by God. If the goal is not served, the consequence is a rejection or modification of election as happened in the life of Saul and David (pp. 98, 99). This last statement is at variance with the truth. The rejection of Saul from his throne and the divine admonition given David does not mean an annihilation or modification of election itself. Election is the sacrosanct decision of God, the eternal divine decree; it will neither be annihilated nor modified according to the behaviour of its subjects. Election is the primary factor, but the behaviour of man should be a constant accommodation to this sovereign divine decision. In other words, election cannot be directed by man; otherwise, it would not be election. Thus, the behaviour of man is nothing else than a mark and admonition for this world indicating the direction of God's election. The revelation of God in Hos. 2:18, 19; Is. 54:7-10; 55:3 gives decisive witness to this truth.

Speaking of the election of the prophets and priests as *Ebed Yahweh*, it would have been good to give an exposition of the name prophet (*nabi*, inspired speaker; *roeb*, seer; *chozeb*, foreteller; *tsopheb*, watchman) and priest (*kohen*, Arabian *kabin*: verb form *kabana*, to foretell hidden things) because these names comprehend the character of the mission of their bearers. For example, of the name *kohen* it is evident that priests have had almost the same character as prophets. They were the advisors of the king, with this difference that their duty also was of a cultic nature in teaching the will of God (Deut. 33:10), watching the Torah (Jer. 18:18; Ezra 7:6), cult, morality, right (II Chron. 15:3; Mal. 2:4), and offering sacrifice (Deut. 33:10). What is said in connection with the *Ebed Yahweh* "Justice is not the only divine principle or even the highest principle" is an interpretation by the writer. Whatever may be said of the person of the *Ebed Yahweh*, one thing is sure: justice and grace are not to be separated in his Being. The justice of God in and through his suffering and death became grace for this wicked world. (Judgment manifested in his life is the basis of grace given freely for man.)

In the fifth section entitled "Election without Covenant," we expected an explanation of how God provided for the election of Gentiles such as Rahab (Josh. 6:22, 23; Matt. 1:5), Ruth (Ruth 4:13-27), and the inhabitants of Nineveh (Jon. 1:4) who were grafted as the branches of the wild olive tree into the good olive tree, (Rom. 11:11-25). This was left out. The author wants to prove that the Egyptian Pharaoh, the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar and the Persian Cyrus also are chosen. There is no doubt that Yahweh as the Creator of all freely disposes of his creatures and freely uses them where and when it is fit for his purpose, even as he can call them "servant," when he so desires, (Jer. 25:9; 27:6) or "anointed" (Is. 45:1). Nobody can hinder him in his sovereign activity. From this fact, however, it does not follow that these Gentile kings were also chosen. What a difference there is between them and the chosen people Israel! Israel is "the people" of Yahweh, who dwells in the midst of Israel (Is. 12:6; Num. 5:3; Ps. 46:5; Hos. 11:9; Joel 2:27) and is a "high tower," "shield," and "refuge" (Ps. 59:9, 11, 16) for his "holy people" (Deut. 7:6; 28:9). It should not even be forgotten that this word *bachar* (to choose) never appears in connection with the names of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. Jacob also is called "servant," but in the same verse there is a determinative about him, "Israel my chosen" (Is. 45:4). The service of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus is of a temporary and instrumental significance. Their commission is a manifestation of the divine pedagogy (religious pragmatism) and belongs to the general (common) grace of God.

The last section with its title "The Heir of Election" means to be a connecting bridge between the Old and New Testament, giving an acceptable answer to one of the most vexing problems, whether the New Testament church is a direct continuation of the Old Testament Covenant. Historical facts, many statements of theologians, and Biblical passages taken especially from the New Testament prove the correctness of this supposition. As in the Old Testament, so in the New Testament, the Remnant is the seed on which the life of believers rests and by which the Kingdom of God continues. It is not important that the later Judaism and its communities, the synagogues, were the connecting points. It is much more important that in Jesus Christ and in his living body the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled and this divine heritage was given both for the Jews and Gentiles. Quite correct is his statement, "The Church is the Israel of God" (p. 168), the life of which is rooted in the ever-living Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church. Here there would have been an opportunity to make a comparison and to look for a coherence between the New Testament *ecclesia* (*ek-kaleo*) and the Old Testament *qahal* (to call out) which not only in their grammatical sense, but also in their structure and characteristics suit each other.

In spite of our differing view-points and theological conceptions, we heartily acknowledge the value of this book written by a profound thinker with scientific method and apparatus.

Our word concerning the viewpoint and theological conception of the author is this: "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (I. Cor. 14:8).

—JOSEPH ZSIROS.

*So We Believe So We Pray*, by George A. Buttrick, New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951, Pp. 232. \$2.75.

This book from the pen of George A. Buttrick, one of Protestantism's keenest thinkers, is an exposition of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. The author analyzes great Christian affirmations, traces their historical development, and presents the present-day application. True faith finds its fulfillment in prayer. Faith without prayer is dead. The Lord has given us a model for all prayer in the prayer which he taught his disciples. Dr. Buttrick explores the significance of each clause and shows its relationship to the whole. In this volume the author succeeds in bringing new insights to familiar truths. On matters of Biblical criticism, to which Dr. Buttrick subscribes, not all readers would agree. Nevertheless, the book should serve to broaden the reader's appreciation of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith as well as provide ample sermonic material for the preacher.

## PART I

Man is born to believe. He believes in either something or someone. If he does not believe in God, he tries to believe in success or in himself. When faith in God is cast aside, faith itself does not cease. A man might as well resolve not to breathe as not to believe. But it is only when man puts his faith in God that he finds peace for the present life and assurance for the future.

That God exists the writers of Scripture nowhere try to prove. They assume his existence. The traditional arguments for the existence of God will always fail to convince a confirmed unbeliever that he is real. "If God is God, no man will find God; he will be found of God. The initiatives originally

and constitutionally belong to God, and only the responses belong to man."

What about Jesus Christ? What about his power to save? In many ways Jesus is "painfully" human. To the citizens of Nazareth he was only their neighbor's boy. But what about him? He is the Universal Man. Referring to himself as the "Son of Man," Christ appeals to people of all races. Belonging exclusively to no one nation, yet claimed by citizens of all, he only is able to bring genuine unity in our divided world. He is the Worshipped Man. The greatest experiences of life are performed in Jesus' name—baptism, marriage, and burial. He is the Forgiving and Abiding Man. Christ is God for only God can forgive sins. By his death and resurrection he took the sting out of death and so opened heaven's portals allowing its sunshine to bathe our souls.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the Church at Pentecost. Who is he? He is the Interpreter of Jesus, the Apostle of Christ, the Inspirer of mankind in wisdom, courage and love. "It is better to know that Christ lives in me than that Christ lives in the flesh on my street" (p. 62). The prime need of our world is a new spirit, but we are so slow to recognize that the word must be spelled with a capital S.

Why should the Church become an article of faith, when many people no longer believe in it? In spite of its failures it remains as the home of the worship of God, the home of the grace of Christ, the home of the communion of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the forgiveness of sins and feel its necessity only insofar as we perceive the heinousness of sin. Inasmuch as sin is not basically against man but against God, only God is able to provide forgiveness. Furthermore, in Christ we see God's forgiveness at work in the world of men who receive him. Upon the cross Christ paid the debt. "Heaven met the power of evil in dread encounter on Calvary, and conquered in love's seeming defeat" (p. 98). How shall we respond to such forgiving love? Expose ourselves to it, accept the pardon by faith, forgive those who have sinned against us.

God made us to be citizens of two worlds. The Christian is not at home in this world, he longs for a better home. He yearns for what his eyes cannot see. The belief in immortality is shared by devotees of the various religions, but only the Christian can rest in peace. Jesus "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). That Jesus arose we may ascertain without doubt when we consider the testimony of the men who saw the risen Christ and the fact of the existence of the Church. Because he lives we too shall live.

## PART II

Jesus gave his disciples the Lord's Prayer in answer to a prayer. They besought him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). It has been called "the Model Prayer." It is so well known by all Christendom that there is danger we shall lose its full meaning. Familiarity breeds contempt. It could be so even with the Lord's Prayer. Rarely is it prayed with trembling and due reverence.

When we pray "Our Father who art in heaven," we thereby recognize God's authority over us, his holiness beckoning us, his love seeking to win us. We ought not to slide hastily over the pronoun "our." It includes the entire family of nations for only in Christ is there unity.

God's name is to be hallowed for we pray "Hallowed be thy name." What does that teach? It means that the world is pagan, for the direct opposite of "hallowed" is "profane." "God himself must do the hallowing, for profane men cannot

of themselves work a holy change" (p. 146). God's name must be hallowed because it is not only a mark of personal identification but a revelation of his character.

The present generation does not like the word "kingdom;" it reminds us of totalitarianism. Nevertheless we utter, "Thy kingdom come." "The word kingdom, though it may threaten death when applied to man, is the promise of life when used of God" (p. 155). The fact that we pray such a petition reveals that the kingdom has reached the outposts of our lives. But in the higher spiritual sense the kingdom has not yet come, or there would be no need to pray this part of the prayer. It has not yet come in our individual lives or in our corporate life. "The prayer 'Thy kingdom come,' if only we knew, is asking God to conduct a major operation" (p. 160).

The Great Divide of all history is the brook Cedron. It is on this line that all battles are fought. We choose either to remain in the Jerusalem of our self-centeredness, or to cross the brook Cedron into the garden where we must pray "Thy will be done." Man's will is free, but only within the bounds of the sovereignty of God. In this petition we surrender self to God so that we implore God's will to be done—to me, through me, for me and for all mankind.

Every man is dependent upon God for daily bread.

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,  
And back of the flour the mill,  
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,  
And the sun and the Father's will. (Babcock)

Each one who asks for daily bread must be faithful in his daily work, live in childlike trust, and be content with a simple life. Man needs living Bread. Of this the prayer also speaks as it asks for a daily Providence.

"Forgive us our debts." "Forgiveness is not mere acquittal; it is a re-creation" (p. 199). Man cannot extricate himself from his debt to God. Only God can help; therefore, Christ taught man to pray this petition. Pardon is not easy. It is not merely a resolution to forget. Jesus grieved, suffered, and died—thus he forgave. Only as we are willing to forgive our debtors are we in the proper mood to receive the forgiveness of God. Only God can give us the forgiving spirit, even as only he can forgive sins.

Unaided man is helpless against the treachery of Satan. For that reason Jesus taught, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Man is utterly destitute without God at his side. Only Christ could teach this prayer for it is really a request for the coming of the Deliverer. Man can live triumphantly over evil by the power of God. But woe to him who trifles with evil!

The key to the redemption of the world is the doxology of the Lord's Prayer. It denotes the surrender of man's will in worship. Only the worship of God above all can save man from desolation and destruction. The motto for a new age ought to be "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." "Men are tall only when they kneel. Men are truly one family only when they pray" (p. 231). This we believe, therefore, so we pray.

—HENRY A. MOUW.

*The Heritage of the Reformation*, edited by Elmer J. F. Arndt. New York: Richard R. Smith, 1950. Pp. 264. \$3.00.

The volume before us is a symposium commemorating the centennial of Eden Theological Seminary, an institution of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Apropos to the occasion, the essays are a series of studies of our Reformation heritage with a contemporary application. They are written in commendable literary style and are good reading. They are typical

of much contemporary theological literature which shows its authors to subscribe to some of the doctrines of historic Protestantism and to reject others. In the essay entitled *Jesus the Christ, Our Lord* there is a clear witness to the Biblical conception of the person and work of the Savior; in more than one of the essays salvation by faith in the merits of Christ alone is emphasized; and, the essay on the sacraments is an evangelical statement essentially Calvinistic. On the other hand, various essays show their authors to be out of sympathy with the position of the Reformers and subsequent Protestantism with respect to the authority and infallibility of the Scriptures and the place of a confession of faith in the life of the Church.

In the center of the heritage of the Reformation was the conviction of the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Church and the world. In the essay mentioned above there is a beautiful statement of the full deity of our Lord which, to this reader, is the most rewarding chapter in the book. The life of our Lord is declared to be "tremendously and transcendently more luminous than what all of our Christological doctrines so earnestly endeavor to say. . . . As the New Testament men tell it, the life of Jesus is the story of a true man in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead" (p. 86). "Only a sinless One could become the Christ who delivers us from our sin. Such a One could not stem from our race of sinners. He who mediates for God can only be one who comes to us from God. . . . The meaning of the life of Jesus, as our Savior and Lord has been unravelled for us in the light of the events of Calvary and Easter Morn. For the life of Jesus is not the achievement of divine sonship but the unfolding of his divine sonship in the fulfillment of the will of God for our salvation" (pp. 88f). The Christology of the author of this essay, Samuel D. Press, is at variance, therefore, with that of Henry Pitney Van Dusen set forth in another symposium under the caption *Liberal Theology*. In his essay, "The Significance of Jesus Christ," the latter objects to any consideration of "radical discontinuity" between God and man and takes a position which appears identical to that of the pantheistic liberalism of the nineteenth century. "Unless God is in some measure incarnate in the life of every man, he cannot have become fully incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth." Then appears the repeated formula, "In Jesus of Nazareth God himself was present, as fully present as it is possible for him to be present in a truly human life." While Dr. Press avers that they who saw Jesus actually saw God, Dr. Van Dusen writes, "In and through Jesus' words and acts and attitudes and inmost spirit, the Life of God spoke as fully as it was possible for the Sovereign of all reality to find expression through a man of Nazareth in the days of the Caesars. This is a very great claim. But it is a claim implying definite limitations. Limitations of knowledge—such knowledge as could normally have been available to a man of Jesus' time, place and circumstance. Limitations of outlook—such breadth of comprehension and depth of insight as could occur in a genuine human spirit of that day. Limitations of divine indwelling, of incarnation. It is mistaken to claim that in Jesus, the whole Being of God was present, that God's Purpose was fully expressed through him" (pp. 220f). Significantly, in this essay on "The Significance of Jesus Christ" Dr. Van Dusen has nothing to say about the death and resurrection of Christ while in the New Testament these events constitute the center of gravity.

The chapter on "The Scriptures" sets forth the thesis that "the Word of God is somehow written in, and yet to be distinguished from, the words of the Bible" (p. 36), and the author attempts to show that that was the Reformers' position. With a quotation or two from Luther, none from the other

Reformers, and a few quotations from contemporary works the writer seeks to demonstrate that while "the Reformers uniformly believed that the Scripture is the Word of God," they did not mean that there is "logical identity," but that the Bible "presents, conveys, records" the Word of God (p. 43). Having taken this position the author goes on to say, "The authoritative character and infallibility belong really and primarily to the Word of God and only secondarily to the Scriptures. Scripture shares these attributes only as it is a vehicle of the Word of God. . . . To the Reformers the Bible was definitely not an external infallible authority" (pp. 43f).

It is difficult to understand how a number of contemporary scholars have had the temerity to make such statements as these. Themselves having rejected the authority of the Bible they seek to bring the Reformers to their side by blandly blinding themselves to the facts of history. Concerning the theory of inspiration held by the Reformers there is room for dispute, but concerning their attitude towards its infallibility and absolute authority there is no room for question. Says David Schaff, "The view held by Protestants, that the Scriptures are the sole infallible record of revealed truth, was adopted by all the Reformers and incorporated in the Protestant Confessions. . . . The Scriptures alone are the authoritative textbook of religion" (*Our Fathers Faith and Ours*, p. 154). Reinhold Seeberg of Berlin, whose *Textbook of the History of Doctrines* is the best in the field, says, "The Scriptures were for Luther an absolute authority" (*op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 302). This position is proven at length by M. Reu in his monograph, *Luther and the Scriptures*. As for Zwingli's position, Dr. Seeberg begins his discussion with the words, "In endeavoring to depict the reformatory ideas of Zwingli, we must begin with the emphasis laid by him upon the Authority of the Holy Scriptures" (*op. cit.*, p. 308).

Calvin's position hardly needs explanation, but we cite two quotations of the many that could be given, one very well-known and the other in an untranslated sermon. "Since we are not favored with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve his truth in perpetual remembrance, it (the Scriptures, M.E.O.) obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God himself" (*Institutes*, I, 7, 1). "Let us note well that the Holy Scripture will never serve us as it ought, if we are not persuaded that God is the author of it. For if we come to read Moses, or someone of the prophets as a history of a mortal man, shall we feel a quickening of the Spirit of God who illumines us? Much of it would be needed. For the Holy Scripture will be as a dead thing and without vigor within us, until we have known that it is God who speaks there, and who declares to us there his will. . . . Because God speaks there, and not at all man. . . ." (Sermon on 2 Tim. 3:16).

Dr. J. Cramer (*De Schriftbeschouwing van Calvin: Een historischdogmatische studie*. 1881, Utrecht) and his son, Dr. J. A. Cramer (*De Heilige Schrift Bij Calvin*. Utrecht, 1926) may have disagreed with the Princeton school of theology in general and with Dr. Warfield in particular in seeking to interpret Calvin's doctrine of inspiration, but in the matter under consideration the Dutch scholars would agree with Warfield completely. (E.g., "Calvin speaks continually of the authority of the Holy Scriptures. If men wish to be called disciples of Calvin, then they must lay all the emphasis on this authority. . . ." [J. A. Cramer, *op. cit.*, p. 10]). The recent study of A. Dakin is as positive: Calvin's judgment on Scripture "is based on the doctrine of Scripture as the infallible

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Word of God . . . he firmly insists on the fact that the Bible as a whole is both infallible and authoritative" (*Calvinism*, p. 173).

In this same chapter on the Scriptures the author has an excellent discussion on the destructiveness of much Biblical criticism (pp. 48-52). Because of the "uncritical acceptance of the doctrines of the universal reign of natural law and of biological evolution" belief in miracles became impossible. "The postulates of natural science were too largely allowed to become the dogmas of theology. God's revelation of himself gave way to man's thoughts about God." When Biblical criticism had done its worst, "God let loose Karl Barth. Wellhausen died in 1918; Karl Barth's commentary on Romans made its first appearance in 1919. These occurrences strangely constitute a turning point which marks a remarkable transformation in the approach to the Bible" (p. 52). "Whereas the general endeavor had been to seek what light could be shed upon the Bible through critical research, today there is a growing concern to ask what light the Bible has to shed upon us, what its authentic message is, a desire to recover the theological interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God" (p. 53). Now again men see that the Bible "was produced, not by the religious community as a whole, but rather by 'holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,' and it is in this distinctive fact that their unique authority resides" (p. 55).

Having commented on the essay on "The Scriptures" we turn to the chapter "Proclaiming the Word" and find therein many fine passages. Too many sermons are either essays on morality and religion, discussions of current issues, or simply pious exercises. Some sermons are "so predominantly moralistic in

content, language and delivery that the 'ought' completely overshadows the 'is' with the result that the message, from beginning to end, has the flavor of a religious harangue or unwelcome exhortation. The fact that well-meant criticisms in man-to-man relationships are sometimes turned back with the remark, 'Don't preach to me,' is sufficient evidence to indicate that preaching is regarded to be synonymous with moralizing" (pp. 126f). Ministers should preach the whole counsel of God and not preach in a "key-hole" manner, giving the faithful a very small glimpse of what God has to say (p. 135); and preaching should keep its center in the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ. The author believes that the "ineffectiveness of the Church in our time" is due to "meagre, shallow, moralistic preaching" which has not been faithful to the "Word of the cross" (p. 140). Along with the many fine things that he has to say the author insists on a distinction between the Word of God and the Scriptures (pp. 130ff). (This position, noted before, recurs in the volume. Vide, p. 221, footnote.)

Other emphases which may interest readers of the *Bulletin* are an aversion to confessionalism which does "violence to the ecumenical cause" (pp. 242, 245), especially when confessions of faith are made tests for faith (pp. 67, 238); a rejection of holding to "particular historical legacies . . . as embodying the essential beliefs which must be taught, learned, and held as the pure doctrine once delivered to the saints" (p. 242); and a strong emphasis on the significance and blessings of the ecumenical movement. This last theme is touched on frequently, receiving the ascription "The New Reformation and Prayer" in one chapter heading, receiving full treatment in another whole chapter, "The Ecumenical Reality of the Church," and being referred to elsewhere (pp. 80, 101, et al.).

—M. EUGENE OSTERHAVEN.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Summer Conference for Pastors and Christian Workers will be held on the Hope College campus, Holland, August 6-10.

The speakers and teachers for the Conference will be Dr. William Childs Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, Dr. Joseph Haroutunian, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Dr. Simon Blocker and Dr. Richard C. Oudersluys of our seminary, the Rev. Bert Brower, Director of Adult Work of the Board of Education, and Mrs. James Wayer, Holland, for many years a member of the Board of Foreign Missions.

Delegates will be offered the delightful accommodations for room and board in the new Durfee Hall on the college campus.



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